

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR PN CS
SUBJ: LOCAL REACTION TO PANAMA CANAL TREATY

1. SUMMARY: US/PANAMA ACCORFN ON NEW CANAL TREATY APPLAUDED IN BOTH OPPOSITIONA AND PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS. ADMINISTRATION'S PROBLEM IN GETTING CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL UNDERSTOOD, BUT CONFIDENCE WIDELY EXPRESSED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WILL PREVAIL IN GETTING AGREEMENTS RATIFIED BY CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. COMMENTING IN LEADING DAILY LA NACION AUGUST 21, HIGHLY RESPECTED OPPOSITION JORNALIST JULIO SUNOL EXPRESSED STRONG SUPPORT

FOR THE US-PANAMA CANAL AGREEMENT. IN AN INCISIVE ANALYSIS, HE OBSERVED THAT THE FLEXIBILITY DEMONSTRATED BY BOTH SIDES WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ACHIEVING CONSENSUS AFTER YEARS OF NEGOTIATION, NOTING AT SAME TIME THAT "GOOD WILL OF PRESIDENT CARTER CANNOT BE DOUBTED, AND THAT BOGOTA MEETING INFLUENCED TORRIJOS. ACKNOWLEDGING

THE DIFFICULTY OF RATIFICATION, SUNOL ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO SELL TREATY TO US PUBLIC IF US GAVE UP RIGHT
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TO DEFEND THE CANAL (SNUOL CALLS IT "TO INTERVENE"). TYING TREATY TO US-LA POLICY, SUNOL STATES THAT THE US PRESIDENT, "WHO IS LOOKING TOWARD A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH LATIN AMERICA, KNOWS THAT THIS OBJECTIVE WILL BE VIABLE TO THE EXTENT THAT THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE - THE COLONIAL ENCLAVE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CONTINENT - IS FACED UP TO. (THE LATTER) IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE CONTINENT...". SUNOL CONCLUDES THAT "SEEN IN HISTORIC TERMS, THE TREATY BECOMES

A FORWARD STEP TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EQUITABLE RELATIONS
AMONG ALL OUR COUNTRIES."

3. A SIMILAR THEME WAS EXPRESSED EDITORIALY BY PRO-GOVERNMENT
DAILY EXCELSION AUGUST 23. "PRESIDENT CARTER WILL ENGAGE IN A
CAMPAIGN OF PERSUASION", THE COMMENTARY BEGINS, AT SAME TIME NOTING
STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE TREATY AND THE NEED FOR THE PRESIDENT TO
GENERATE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE AGREEMENT.
EDITORIAL ACCURATELY DESCRIBES THE PROBLEMS FACING THE PRESIDENT,
PARTICULARLY THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE BY MANY
AMERICANS AND THE DIFFICULTIES, POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE, IN
GETTING CONGRESSIONAL RATIFICATION. IT NOTES THAT THE PRESIDENT
MUST OBTAIN STRONG SUPPORT FROM THE LIBERAL PRESS, INTELLECTUALS
AND OTHERS TO ACHIEVE HIS GOAL.

4. EXCELSIOR IS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL PREVAIL. THE
EDITORIAL CONCLUDES BY SAYING THAT "IT IS KNOWN THAT CARTER WILL
ENCOUNTER RESISTANCE IN THE SENATE FOR THE NEW TREATY. BUT THE
PRESIDENT HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT AMONG HIS VIRTUES, HE IS CON-
VINING AND TENACIOUS. HIS POWER OF PERSUASION AND HIS TENACITY
CAN WORK MIRACLES. AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF BEST PRESS AND THE BEST
INFORMED SECTIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION, HE WILL BE ABLE TO PUT FORTH
WHAT IS TODAY HIS OWN THESIS, THAT OF A STATESMAN WHO WANTS
ANOTHER TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIS COUNTRY AND LATIN AMERICA
BASED ON DEEDS, NOT BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS."

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5. COMMENT: THE TWO PIECES PROVIDE GOOD EXAMPLES OF HOW THE POLI-
TICAL MAINSTREAM IN COSTA RICA, BOTH OPPOSITION AND PRO-GOVERN-
MENT, VIEW THE ACCORDS AND THEIR PROSPECTS FOR RATIFICATION. THE
PITFALLS WITHIN THE US DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THAT CAN WAYLAY THE
AGREEMENT ARE RECOGNIZED. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THERE IS GREAT
FAITH IN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE PRESIDENT. THE GENERAL FEELING
HERE IS THAT BOTH WILL SUCCESSFULLY OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES AND
THE TREATY WILL BE RATIFIED.
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